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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Ability and Authority of Servants in a Ming Lineage Plan

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Abstract

In considering Huo Tao's *Family Admonitions*, a text included in a lineage genealogy of the early sixteenth century, this article investigates its five constituent logics (Confucian propriety, bureaucratic division of responsibility, subsistence agriculture, wealth creation, and punitive patriarchy). It explains what sorts of expert abilities Huo considered necessary and what relations of authority (defined as power over others that they accept) those abilities entailed. Huo's plan relies not only on the expertise of lineage members, but also on the abilities of hired workers and bondservants/slaves who held their positions for a long time. Their positions gave them authority in the workspace over the lineage members who outranked them legally, calling into question the utility of simple categories of "social status." Because the text was later copied repeatedly into other lineages' compilations, Huo's plan must have made sense to Ming and Qing lineage leaders, so it may illuminate how they constructed relations of authority and social status.

Introduction

A set of Ming lineage instructions that includes both kin and non-kin experts offers one way to raise and address questions about the relationship of expert ability, social status, and authority. Huo Tao (1487–1540), who became a powerful official in the Ministries of Rites and of Personnel, composed instructions for a co-habiting lineage of about one hundred members in his native place, Foshan in Guangdong.[1] The *Family Admonitions of*

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[1]Huo Tao 霍韜 (1487–1540), *Huo Weiya jiaxun* 霍渭厓家訓 [The Family Admonitions of Huo Weiya], reprint in *Guangzhou da dian* 廣州大典 [Great compendium of works from Canton], volume 356, pp. 443–473, which reproduces the *Guojia tushuguan cangben* edition (Guangzhou: Guangzhou chubanshe, 2014). The first fascicle, "Outline of Principles," (*Jiaxun tigang* 家訓提綱) is unnumbered and excluded from some editions. For the number of residents, Huo, *Jiaxun* 1/5a. The main section headings (all in the fascicle

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Huo Weiya has attracted scholarly attention, in part because of its intriguing two-color diagram of the communal domestic compound. But its full complexity has yet to be explored. I will show, first, that complications emerge from a close consideration of daily work that follows historian Susan Mann's method of visualizing people's interactions in space, playing out the scene.[2] Second, I will show that the *Admonitions* combines five different approaches to lineage management, approaches that might seem to be at odds with one another. Third, I will delineate the expertise and authority of specialists, including owned and hired servants, in managing the lineage. My overall message for historians is that raising questions about how Huo's utopian plan could have functioned challenges the concept of "social status" in ways that apply more broadly.

The *Family Admonitions*, only one of a number of Ming lineage instructions, is well-embedded in Chinese history and deserves study. It is unclear exactly when Huo wrote the *Admonitions*, but his service as Minister of Rites (1528–30) and Minister of Personnel (1533–1536) undoubtedly added to the text's cachet.[3] Historian and fieldwork proponent David Faure has argued that Huo played a major role in knitting Guangdong into the Ming empire and Chinese culture, by winning the emperor's permission to extend the right to ancestral halls down the rank ladder and dissolving monasteries to profit powerful families.[4] His *Admonitions* attracted praise and imitation in his time.[5] In this attempt to build up his lineage and hold it together—no easy venture[6]—Huo could draw on earlier

numbered "1,") translate roughly as: Outline of Principles, Fields and Gardens, Granaries and Coffers, Increasing Wealth, Taxes and Corvee, Clothing, Wine and Drunkenness, Food, Cappings and Weddings, Funerals and Sacrifices, Tools, Lineagemen, Rules for Children, and Other Regulations by Type. There are appended rules on the ancestral shrine, community school, and academy.

[2]Susan Mann, "Scene-Setting: Writing Biography in Chinese History," *The American Historical Review* 114.3 (2009), 631–39, at 637–39.

[3]David Faure, "Lineage as a Cultural Invention: The Case of the Pearl River Delta," *Modern China* 15.1 (1989), 4–36, at 17, says Huo wrote the lineage rules after passing the metropolitan exam in 1514. Other dates of composition, printing, and prefacing given in prefaces and postfaces include Zhengde *dingmao* (1507–08), Jiajing 8 (1528–29), and Jiajing *jichou* (1529–30); and the text itself (1/31a), mentions the year Jiajing 5 (1526–27), so the transmitted version must post-date that year. Inoue Tôru 井上徹, Zuzong de xingcheng he gouzao 宗族的形成和構造 [The Formation and Construction of Lineages] (1989; Chinese version *Xinan minzu xueyuan xuebao* 1990.3: 94–99), p. 96, says Huo Tao set up the ancestral temple, academy, and shared estate in 1525. For Huo's career, see L. Carrington Goodrich, *The Dictionary of Ming Biography* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 679–83.

[4]David Faure, *Emperor and Ancestor: State and Lineage in South China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 100–103, 106–7. Faure discusses the local context at length. Yi Jo-lan has connected Huo's role in the sericultural ritual at court with his approach to gender relations in the *Admonitions*; see Yi Jo-lan, "Gender and Sericulture Ritual Practice in Sixteenth-Century China," *Journal of Asian History* 48.2 (2014), 281–302, at 282–84. For another study of Huo as a bridge between local and central ritual concerns, see Chu Hui-juan 儲卉娟, *Guojia hugou: shehui shi shejiaoxia de mingdai da yi li—yi Huo Tao wei qieru dian* 國家互构: 社會史視角下的明代'大禮議 —以霍韜為切入點 [Coevolution Between Jia and Guo: the Great Ritual Controversy in Ming Dynasty from Perspective of Sociological History: In Case of Huo Tao], *Shehuixue pinglun* 4.4 (2016), 64–76.

[5]Huang Qinglin 黄庆林, *Chuantong jiaxun yu diqu renwen jingshen de guanxi yanjiu* 传统家训与地区人文精神的矣系研究 [A Study of the Relationship between Traditional Family Mottoes and Regional Humanistic Spirit], *Journal of Wuyi University, Social Sciences Edition* 22.4 (2020), 1–6.

[6]A mid-sixteenth century descendent of a Huizhou scholar who had laid out family instructions wrote that following a fire, "there were many problems. There were shortages in the figures for the funds. The family teachings were seldom heard, and they were not followed in men's actions. Each followed his own convenience, with people scattering their residences so that gatherings became fewer by the day." Quoted in Joseph P. McDermott, *The Making of a New Rural Order in South China, Volume 1: Village, Land, and Lineage in Huizhou, 900–1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 315.

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guidelines for family rituals by the Song scholars Sima Guang (1019–1086) and Zhu Xi (1130–1200), and on well-publicized guidelines for the Zheng family, which by early Ming times had lived communally for ten generations and had over one hundred living members.[7] But he diverged from them significantly to include Foshan's industries, and reliance on non-kin. Even fieldwork has failed to determine whether the Huo lineage implemented the utopian vision of the *Admonitions*, as Faure's self-contradictory judgements show: he writes that Huo's text "aspired to a perfection in social relationships that was quite unattainable," and that

> The map … remains valuable as a confirmation that the village plan as seen in recent times has descended from the Ming, but the text shows that in actual fact, undivided households on the scale indicated by this plan could not have been common.[8]
>
> Whether or not the Huos carried out the plan, as lineages multiplied in Ming and Qing times, they often included Huo's text in their own compilations.[9]

This popular model presents a vision of the interactions of the people in the compound or village with four different legal standings. Moving from top to bottom in terms of "social status," some Huo lineage members (or their husbands) had earned legal privileges, salary, and social perquisites by passing examinations or holding office; call them "gentry." Most lineage members, like most Ming people, were respectable subjects (*liang min* 良民).[10] In Huo's model, the lineage hires on contract some paid workers; such workers, as historian Claude Chevaleyre explains, were legally base with respect to the employer's family, but respectable vis-à-vis others.[11] Working for and living with the lineage members are bondservants (*pu* 僕), who were legally categorized as polluted "base subjects" (*jian min* 賤民).[12] Often those who had fallen into poverty, bondservants in Ming were sold and bought, forced to labor without pay, and beaten by their masters,

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[7]John W. Dardess, "The Cheng Communal Family: Social Organization and Neo-Confucianism in Yuan and Early Ming China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 34 (1974), 7–52, at 8. Zheng Zhenman defines "family" (*jia* 家) as a group of genuine or fictive kin living together and sharing property, and "lineage" (*zu* 族) as a group genuinely or fictively descended from a common ancestor, living and owning property separately; but he comments that forms varied enormously. See Zheng Zhenman, *Family Lineage Organization and Social Change in Ming and Qing Fujian* (1992), translated by Michael Szonyi (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2001), 24, 22. For more on variety, as well as the history of lineage organization, see Patricia Ebrey and James Watson, eds., *Kinship Organization in Late Imperial China, 1000–1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986) and much later scholarship.

[8]Faure, *Emperor and Ancestor*, 114–15.

[9]Claude Chevaleyre, "Domestic Law and Slavery in Late Imperial China: Glimpses from Lineage Registers," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 81.1–2 (2021), 39–65, at 61.

[10]Translating "liang min" as "honorable subjects" or "good people" reflects neither normal English usage today nor what the term meant in Ming times. *Liangmin* status was baseline respectability, a step up from being "base" or "mean." Respectable people could earn honors of various kinds.

[11]Claude Chevaleyre, "Serving and Working for Others: Negotiating Legal Status and Social Relations of Household Laborers in Late Imperial China," *Journal of Global Slavery* 5 (2020), 170–203, at 179–80.

[12]Claude Chevaleyre, "Acting as Master and Bondservant: Considerations on Status, Identities, and the Nature of 'Bondservitude' in Late Ming China," in *Labour, Coercion and Economic Growth in Eurasia, 17th–20th Centuries*, edited by Alessandro Stanziani (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 237–72, at 248–52.

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which was legal when not excessive.[13] Although the lineage members are the masters, I will show that Huo's plan gives bondservants and hired laborers authority over lineage members, putting them in the position of mediating their masters' primary, Confucian relationships. The choreography and relations I suggest are only hypotheses, but that is true of much that is widely accepted in historiography: here, however, the findings speak of and for the voiceless.[14]

Low-ranking hired and owned workers supply labor and abilities the lineage needed to manage people, space, and resources. The *Family Admonitions* envisions a lineage organization centered on family ritual. By considering in detail the diagram of the house it includes, I will show that non-lineage members are necessary for the family to carry out Confucian norms. Faure writes that since the forms of the rituals of capping, marriage, funerals, and sacrifices were already "taken for granted" (Zhu Xi's *Family Rituals* was incorporated into Ming law), Ming family manuals "moved on to practical management" of property and propriety.[15] I show that "practical management," in this text, adds to Confucian propriety four further logics, sometimes complementary but sometimes contradictory.

One of those, bureaucratic deployment and control of personnel, supports the three further logics of punitive patriarchy, subsistence agriculture, and mercantile-industrial wealth creation. As slaves/bondservants and hired experts play their work roles, they are, of course, carrying out the general instructions of their owners or employers. But instructions cannot cover the specific judgement calls and detailed decisions they have to make in the course of the workday. To gain any benefit from delegation, the Lineage Head has to trust his employees.[16] These lowly experts, therefore, do not merely exercise agency or illicit power over lineage members such as historians have been finding in the hands of exploited and even enslaved workers. In addition to that kind of power, which an elite mindset might figure as "corrupt," in Huo's vision they exercise authority—legitimate power.

Confucian Propriety in Architecture and Work

The map or diagram at the start of the *Admonitions*, "Diagram of differentiating paths for men and women sharing a stove," appears at first sight to afford architectural regulation of Confucian propriety, the first logic in Huo's text (Figure 1).[17] But visualizing

[13]Chevaleyre, "Serving and Working," 179. Claude Chevaleyre, "Domestic Law," 42, 59. 僕 is consistently written as 人+業 in Huo Tao's text. For domestic bondservants in the Ming and Qing, see *inter alia* Hsieh Hua Bao, *Concubinage and Servitude in Late Imperial China* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014), 95–109.

[14]My analysis is inspired by the Chicago-school sociology of occupations. See Sarah Schneewind, *The Social Drama of Daily Work: A Manual for Historians* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2024).

[15]Faure, *Emperor and Ancestor*, 115–17.

[16]For an application of occupational sociology that explains terminology and focuses on trust see Sarah Schneewind, "What Do Jokes Reveal about Trust in Ming Work Relations?," *Journal of Chinese Literature and Culture* 9.2 (2022), 367–96.

[17]Scholars debate whether the diagram represents a whole village or one domestic compound. Faure contradicts himself on successive pages (*Emperor and Ancestor*, 114–15) about whether the *Family Admonitions* "includes a map of the village inhabited by the undivided household" or whether it "assumes that households were divided and that meals were cooked and served apart." Yi suggests it was intended to diagram one house; see "Gender and Sericulture Ritual Practice," 286. Since the text mentions behavior in the village as *outside*, it seems more likely to be a compound.

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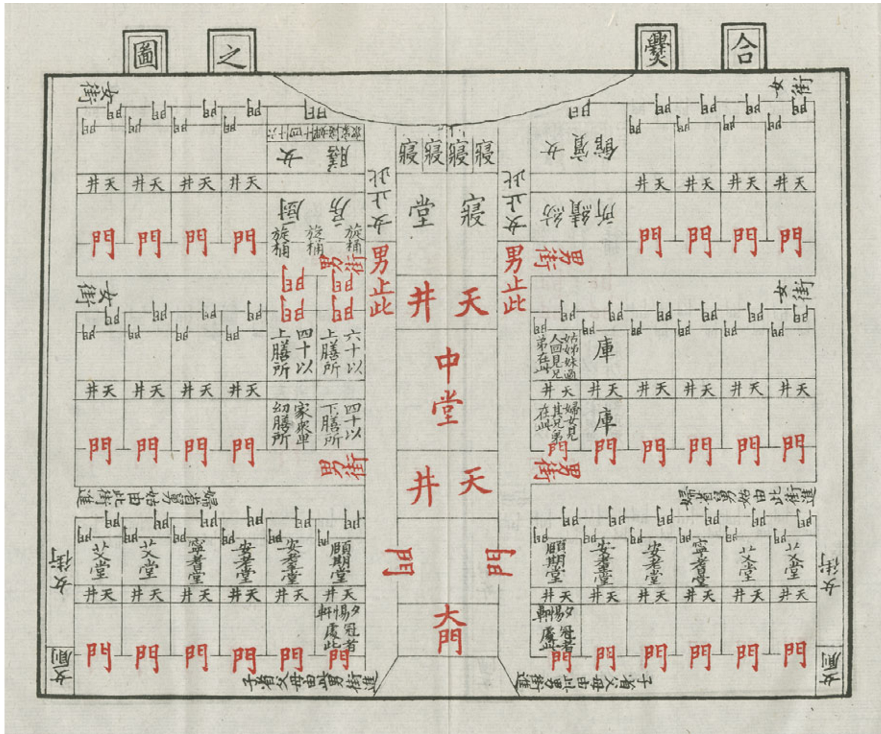

Figure 1. "Hecuan nannü yilu tu" 合爨男女異路圖 (Chart of Different Passageways for Men and Women [for a Lineage] Sharing a Stove), from Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, edition cited, n.p. The full title does not appear on the diagram because of a tear that is replicated in all editions, but Huo's explanation of the diagram is headed "Hecuan nannü yilu tu shuo," so the title is clear.

movement through it suggests that only continual human choice, and the work of lesser humans, can assure propriety.[18]

The floor plan embodies the focus of the *Family Admonitions* on Confucian ritual and propriety in three ways. (For ease of explanation, I follow the convention placing North at the top.) First, on the central axis, to the north of the center, lies the ancestral shrine: a large main room with four smaller niches or rooms on its north side for the four preceding generations.[19] The ancestral shrine straddles the inner/female and outer/male portions of the compound. That makes sense, because both "sons and nephews" (as Huo Tao refers to lineage men) and their primary wives must participate in ancestral worship.[20] Second,

[18]Promoting ethical behavior was common function of lineages or clans throughout history; see for instance Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *Family and Property in Sung China: Yuan Ts'ai's "Precepts for Social Life"* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), chap 3. As Ebrey points out, Song writers Yuan Cai, Zhu Xi, and Sima Guang all shared the idea that socially inferior people were ethically inferior (143). This view continued to be widespread in Ming; one man wrote: "A bondservant is a low human. He insults his deceased ancestors and defiles his own body." Quoted in McDermott, *New Rural Order*, 1:255.

[19]For more on what Huo said about this arrangement, see Chu Hui-juan, *Guojia hugou*, 70.

[20]So when Chevaleyre, "Domestic Law," 54, reads in lineage instructions that "all women were strictly forbidden to enter the temple," this must mean on ordinary days or when they were polluted, for example by

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arrangements in the compound segregate men and women.[21] A line just south of the midpoint of the shrine divides the compound into the front, men's portion, and the rear, women's portion, with the complementary instructions "Men stop here" and (written upside down to indicate the direction of walking) "Women stop here."[22] The diagram's approximately one hundred doors hammer home the message that propriety requires separation, as Confucians going back to ancient times had argued. Huo marks in red (and mentions the color in the text) the men's doors, "men's passageways," and main hall; the women have separate "women's passageways."[23] Ostensibly, men and women in different nuclear families need never meet except at ritual events.

A third element of Confucian propriety is the eating arrangements, which add age and rank hierarchy to gender separation. In the northwest quadrant of the compound is the kitchen. Directly south of the kitchen are three "urine barrels" as toilets for men. Directly across from there, double doors lead into the dining halls for lineage men over forty *sui* (years of age) and over sixty, with a small stretch of "men's path" permitting access. To the south again are dining halls for men under forty and for all the junior men, apparently including bondservants.[24] Likewise, north of the kitchen stands the women's dining hall. It has a main room and four smaller rooms with abbreviated labels comprehensible by reference to the men's categories: [wives over] sixty; [wives over] forty; [female] slaves and concubines; and "all the [junior female] members of the family"—presumably unmarried daughters, but perhaps also very young sons, and female bondservants. The largest room, then, must be for the wives under forty. The rectangle does not divide up neatly, because there are five categories, to allow for the two sorts of wives; whereas in the men's dining area there are only four categories because there is only one sort of husband. Gender, age, and the distinction between primary and secondary wives are all properly assured by the dining arrangements. The centrality of the ancestral hall, the many doors, and the separate paths and dining halls facilitate propriety.

But the crisp precision of the two-color diagram hides the fact that gender segregation relies on the ethical choices of its residents as they go about their daily work. For instance, married couples with their children live in sixteen contiguous two-room dwellings. Each dwelling has three doors: one leads directly from the men's path into the front (southern) room; two lead into the back room from the women's path. The women's doors are offset

menstruation. Worship of shared ancestors has been fundamental to Chinese clans and lineage organizations since ancient times.

[21]The ideal of separation of men and women in daily relations and work has been well-studied; see for instance Francesca Bray, *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), and Susan Mann, "Work and Household in Chinese Culture: Historical Perspectives," in *Re-Drawing Boundaries: Work, Households, and Gender in China*, edited by Barbara Entwisle and Gail E. Henderson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 15–32.

[22]For reading diagrams, especially with labels oriented in various ways, see Daniel Knorr, "Thinking Outside the Walls: Illustrations of Cities and Extramural Space in Chinese Gazetteers," *Journal of the European Association for Chinese Studies* 3 (2022), 123–48, at 129.

[23]Yi, "Gender and Sericulture Ritual Practice," 286, draws attention to the separate pathway: "Huo Tao in particular called attention to these ideas in his family instructions. He said, within an 'extended' family, men and women should walk along different paths, thus respecting the distinction between both spheres" (*nannü yilu* 男女異路; *wainei zhi bie* 外內之別).

[24]Huo has followed the Zheng family model here in differentiating men according to age and not their examination status, but he grants privileges based on examination status, which the Zheng did not. Dardess, "Cheng Communal Family," 21: "the family rules aimed to obliterate all status distinctions based upon riches and poverty, fame and obscurity, or strength and weakness within the communal family group."

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from each other on the left and right of a tiny courtyard, screening the view from the passageway into the back, north, room of the dwelling. But only women are supposed to be on that path anyway. Offset doors in the south would have made more sense, to screen wives serving their husbands from the men's pathway. Likewise, each of the dwellings for the old can be entered directly through one door from the south, from a passageway labelled "Sons visiting their parents enter via this men's path;" and through two offset doors from the back (north), from a passageway labelled "wives visiting their parents-in-law enter via this path." Again, screening at the front would have permitted a daughter-in-law to serve her parents-in-law without being seen from the men's passageway. —Huo decreed that Confucian norms be taught in the community school and through family banquets.[25] That was necessary, because the floorplan could not assure propriety; propriety still depends on the residents' choices.

But choice, too, could achieve only so much. Work necessitates movement through the house that challenges gender segregation. Since the kitchen lies in the inner quarters, the women's part of the house, presumably women cook. How does food get from the kitchen to the old men's dining rooms? Surely it does not go through the toilets (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Detail showing kitchen and dining rooms.

[25]Huo, *Jiaxun*, 1/12a, 1/38–40.

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If wives and daughters were cooking, they would have to bring the food as far as the line and then pass it over: men and women would see each other, or even touch hands, which they were not supposed to do.[26] Huo Tao does not mention this work problem, but one can easily imagine his solution, based on how he proposed to solve a similar problem in Ming court ritual. The Jiajing emperor wished to revive the old ritual in which the empress and other palace women went out to a suburban altar to initiate the year's silk production. Huo Tao had several objections to the plan, but for one objection—that palace women would be seen by outsiders, including security guards—he noted that the solution would be to hire female sedan-chair bearers.[27] Likewise, lineage wives and daughters could delegate the work of serving to male and female bondservants. Serving women carrying food from the kitchen to the men's side could facilitate the high-status and ethical gender separation of the lineage members. Other aspects of lineage management also rely on servants, but grant them more authority.

The Lineage Head and his Bureaucracy

The Zheng communal family had carried out Sima Guang's and Zhu Xi's call for dividing tasks among lineage men so thoroughly as to constitute, in John W. Dardess's words, "a rationalized bureaucracy, in that the rules carefully outlined the duties inherent in each post, established criteria for the selection of office-holders, and specified their terms in office."[28] At its high point, the Zheng family bureaucracy included twenty-five posts, nearly one for every grown man living at home, as well as posts for women.[29] Huo Tao's instruction, too, as its second logic assigns tasks to lineage members (men only, I think) in a bureaucratic fashion. As Faure and Chevaleyre both mention, however, and in contrast to the Zheng family, Huo's lineage also relies on non-kin.[30] Of the eighteen posts Huo describes, lineage men hold ten, bondservants six, and hired workers two. The Lineage Head, directly or through subordinates, oversees them all. Some posts rotate, and others are permanent (see Table 1).

The linkage of ability and authority appears immediately in the rules for lineage posts. To begin with the Confucian ritual aspect of the lineage, the key person to bridge the gap between past and present, between the ancestors as authorities and living lineage members, should be the Ritual Heir, by birth the senior man of the senior branch.[31] Unless he is wise enough to be made Lineage Head (or "Family Manager"), he works like

[26]Mencius 4A.17 affirms that except in emergencies men and women ought not to touch hands. Perhaps there was a pass-through construction like that in college dining halls, which screens workers' faces, or a table across the passageway and a careful choreography in which the cooks approach the table and lay down dishes, then withdraw before male servers come to pick them up. But Huo describes no such arrangement.

[27]Yi, "Gender and Sericulture Ritual Practice," 283.

[28]Dardess, "Cheng Communal Family," 24. Zhu Xi incorporated into his *Family Rituals* an older text by Sima Guang that instructed the family head to assign to his children "specific duties and responsibilities (such as managing the storerooms, stables, kitchen, house properties, fields, or gardens)"; to assure that they did the tasks well; and to set a reasonable budget to provide basic needs for everyone, but graded by rank. Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *Chu Hsi's "Family Rituals": A Twelfth-Century Chinese Manual for the Performance of Cappings, Weddings, Funerals, and Ancestral Rites* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 25.

[29]Dardess, "Cheng Communal Family," 24–26.

[30]Faure, *Emperor and Ancestor*, 115. Chevaleyre, "Domestic Law," 47.

[31]Ebrey, *Chu Hsi's "Family Rituals"*, 8.

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Table 1. Management structure of the Huo family, compiled from Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*

Position		Rotation?	status	Overseen by
Ritual Heir	宗子	No	Lineage man	Lineage Head
Lineage Head/ Family Manager	家長	No	Lineage man	Registrar of Behavior
Registrar of Behavior	司紀過旌善簿	No	Lineage man	Lineage Head
Master of Ceremonies	禮生	Yes	Lineage man	Lineage Head
[Animal] Regulator	牛豬綱領者	Yearly	Lineage man	Fieldwork Regulator?
Fieldwork Regulator	綱領田事者 or 田綱領者	Yearly	Lineage man	Lineage Head
Wealth Manager	司貨	Yearly	Lineage man	Lineage Head
Pottery Manager	司窯冶	No	Lineage man	Wealth Manager
Timber Manager	司木植	No	Lineage man	Wealth Manager
Steel Manager	司炭鐵	No	Lineage man	Wealth Manager
Guest Receptionist	應賓客		bondservant	Lineage Head
Doorman	守大門	No	bondservant	Lineage Head
Protector of Imperial Documents	炕御書	No	bondservant	Lineage Head
Dawn and Dusk Manager	司晨昏	No	bondservant	Lineage Head
Measures Manager	管斗斛	No	bondservant	Fieldwork Regulator
Agricultural Inputs Equalizer	均糞種	No	bondservant	Fieldwork Regulator
Bookkeeper	司書計	No	hired	Wealth Manager
Messenger	司奔走	No	hired	Wealth Manager

everyone else and only presides at sacrifices.[32] Talent and wisdom determine who is Lineage Head, but Huo does not say who selects him. The Lineage Head need not plough, nor undergo the annual assessment that others do, but his good and bad deeds are recorded like everyone else's.[33] His ability, not seniority or rank, leads to him being granted authority over everyone else.

The Lineage Head relies on two lineage specialists for his ritual and ethical work. One mature and upright man records the good and bad deeds of lineage men and women

[32]Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, "Outline of Principles," 1b.
[33]Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, "Outline of Principles," 1b, 8a.

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between ages six and sixty in the Registers of Recording Transgressions and Displaying Virtue.[34] His knowledge probably rests on reports from other lineage members.[35] At a banquet after a ceremony in the ancestral shrine, the Lineage Head consults these registers, then orders the Master of Ceremonies to announce to everyone else those who have done good and bad deeds. (Women's good deeds and transgressions are announced in the inner quarters.) Those who fail to mend their ways after three years are barred from the banquet.[36] The Registrar's position does not rotate, but that of the Master of Ceremonies does, although the term of office is not specified.[37] I take no rotation or unspecified terms as a signal that these lineage members developed useful expertise in ritual and in judging reports of behavior, respectively. That ability meant they were granted some authority over their kin.

The Lineage Head, in teaching and guiding the lineage ethically and ritually, relies on the Ritual Heir, the Registrar of Behavior, and the Master of Ceremonies. Two further positions help him manage the subsistence and acquisitive sides of lineage life. These two positions rotate annually among experienced men, whose performance the Lineage Head appraises at the end of the year. The Fieldwork Regulator manages agricultural production, and the Wealth Manager manages commodity production and trade. In return, the two are excused from ploughing.[38] Each, as I will explain, exerts considerable authority over his kinfolk, and has a staff of assistants; Huo's overriding concern with competence means that the staff members must also have been chosen or kept for their competence. As in our imaginary walk through the house for work, imagining the concrete aspects of their work will show that, despite their lowly status as bondservants, they held power and even authority over lineage members.

Subsistence Agriculture and the Fieldwork Regulator

Along with Confucian propriety, producing food is a central element in Huo's utopia: a third logic. While all lineage boys attend the lineage's so-called "community school" from the age of seven, between the ages of ten and fifteen they also work at ploughing and weeding to learn diligence and frugality. If by twenty-five they have failed to place into a county or prefectural school, they return to farm labor.[39] As Huo writes:

> For managing the livelihood of the lineage, food and other goods are of the greatest urgency. With a hundred people living together, how could it be permitted that they look to others for their resources?[40]

[34]"Registers of Recording Transgressions and Displaying Virtue" (紀過旌善簿), Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, "Outline of Principles," 1b. The Zheng family had a different system of recording good and bad deeds; see Dardess, "Cheng Communal Family," 25. Promoting ethical behavior was a common focus of family instructions throughout history; see for instance Ebrey, *Family and Property*, chap. 3.

[35]Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/19b–20a.

[36]Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/11b–12a.

[37]Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, "Outline of Principles," 1a–b.

[38]Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/1a–b.

[39]Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/19a.

[40]Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/5a. Beginning perhaps with Fan Zhongyan in the Song period, landed estates were a focus of lineage organization, and McDermott discusses at length a Huizhou example; see McDermott, *New Rural Order*, volume 1, chaps. 4 and 5. Not all lineages owned land; see Myron Cohen, "Lineage Organization in North China," *Journal of Asian Studies* 49 (1990), 509–34.

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> From their pooled production, children between one and nine get six pecks (*dou* 斗) of grain per month, and each person older than nine, regardless of sex, gets eight pecks: certified students, provincial degree holders, bondservants, and hired workers get eight pecks; only those who are working extra hard in the fields get twelve pecks. Here the *Admonitions* lays out a vision of the lineage as founded on egalitarian subsistence agriculture: "Those who don't work at the plough don't get food."[41]

For not only does everyone eat the same amount, the first article in the section "Fields and Gardens" stipulates that all the members of the family—men, women, and children—must garden. Adults are to work a garden plot of two *mou*, children one *mou*.[42] (This outside work conflicts with the careful gender separation inside.)[43] In addition, every married adult lineage man between the ages of twenty-five and fifty is responsible for cultivating thirty *mou* of grain fields. Each is given specified inputs and a team consisting of an unmarried boy or man, a servant-boy (童), an (adult) bondservant, and an ox. At the end of each year (encompassing a summer and a winter season), the lineage man reports what his team brought in—they should be able to produce fifteen bushels of grain per year, says Huo, and this grain is what the lineage eats. On the one hand, therefore, Huo Tao's *Admonitions* does embody the ideal of working directly to feed oneself and one's family that powered, according to Chevaleyre, the idea that working for hire was demeaning.[44]

Yet on the other hand, this is not simple subsistence agriculture; rather, it incorporates exceptions, collective property, and specialized oversight. First, if a man has higher ambitions (presumably meaning that he has been admitted to a government school or is serving in office), he is permitted to hire someone from outside to take his place in the fields.[45] Second, plough oxen live together in one paddock and pigs in one sty, and lineage men rotate through a post that regulates the deployment of these animals.[46] And third, all the work is coordinated by one lineage official, the Fieldwork Regulator.[47] The model is not one of subsistence agriculture in which a husband–wife couple feed their family.

The *Admonitions* grants the Fieldwork Regulator considerable authority over his brothers, uncles, sons, and nephews. At the beginning of spring, he figures out which fields are fertile and which barren, then parcels out responsibility for each field.[48] Huo gives no guidelines, but if one thinks about it, the Fieldwork Regulator, in assigning fields,

[41]Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/3a. Chevaleyre calls it "interesting" that "each slave worker for the lineage" gets the same grain allowance as the lineage men ("Domestic Law," 47). If we think concretely, this is simply practical. The eight pecks is a multiple of the scoop for grain dumped into each person's bowl at each meal. With everyone eating from the same stove, graded amounts would be hard to manage. This way, everyone gets the same scoopful(s) and children get a bit less.

[42]Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/1a. It is not clear whether bondservants are included in the count and assignment of garden plots, but based on the model of the plough teams, which are headed by a lineage member, I guess that they are to work with and for the lineage members, including wives, at their direction.

[43]Historians have questioned the reality of the outside/inside and "men plough, women weave" ideal; see for instance Weijing Lu, "Beyond the Paradigm: Tea-Picking Women in Imperial China," *Journal of Women's History* 15.4 (2004), 19–46, and You Wang, "Women Till and Women Weave: Rice, Cotton, and the Gendered Division of Labor in Jiangnan," *Late Imperial China* 45.1 (2024), 1–40.

[44]Chevaleyre, "Working and Serving," 183–84.

[45]Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/2b.

[46]Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/2a.

[47]Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/1–2.

[48]Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/2a–b.

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would have had to consider questions like: Would lineage member A waste the good seed given him, as he did last year? Would lineage member B apply his fertilizer so wisely that he would not need so much? And so on. At harvest time, Huo writes, the Fieldwork Regulator tracks what each team has brought in, then reports to the Lineage Head about each lineage man's diligence or laziness. Barring natural disasters, if a team produces at least ten bushels (two-thirds of the possible fifteen bushels per thirty *mou*) the lineage man in charge earns a top ranking; if seven bushels, a middle ranking; if only five, the lowest ranking.[49] By determining the ratings, the Fieldwork Regulator mediates between each production team and the Lineage Head.

Like any bureaucrat, the Fieldwork Regulator himself is also evaluated, as emerges in section two, "Granaries and Coffers." The Fieldwork Regulator gathers all the produce of the plough, as well as grain payments from tenants, into a series of granaries to feed the lineage, pay taxes, stockpile against disaster, sell on the market, and supply ritual offerings.[50] He calculates the total, how much was expended, how much is surplus, and how much will be needed for planting and, again, reports all that to the Lineage Head. On New Year's Day, everyone gathers, and the accounting is announced. The Lineage Head rewards or punishes the Regulator according to his diligence and his success, based on expenditures and receipts and on whether his work assignments properly considered experience and ability.[51] The Regulator then returns to being a regular ploughman.[52] Having the position rotate limits the Fieldwork Regulator's power and may suggest that his expertise is also limited.

The Fieldwork Regulator "rears" or "fosters" two bondservants/slaves: his staff.[53] One bondservant manages the peck and ten-peck measures critical to the Regulator's judgement of lineage members' contributions, amounts collected in rent, amounts set aside for various purposes, etc. The other doles out fairly (*jun* 均) the manure and seeds for cultivation.[54] Along with their labor and the quality of the assigned fields, these inputs determine a team's harvest output, on which lineage members are judged. And these positions do not rotate.[55] Rather, as with yamen staff who stayed in place while county magistrates came and went, the measures and manure regulators stay in office. The continuity allows the rotating Fieldwork Regulators to rely on these bondservants' knowledge both of measures and inputs, and of the individual lineage men: how they were likely to behave with respect to requesting their inputs, turning in their output, etc. When Ming gazetteers speak of magistrates who equalize (*jun* 均) tax burdens to make

[49]Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/2.

[50]Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/3.

[51]Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/4b

[52]Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/1a.

[53]This choice of verb (*xu* 畜) may come from the widespread practice of "adopting" bondservants to circumvent laws against owning them. See for instance Jie Zhao, *Brush, Seal and Abacus Troubled Vitality in Late Ming China's Economic Heartland, 1500–1644* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2018), 10, 72–75.

[54]Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/3b–4a. The power that managing weights and measures bestowed is vividly illustrated by a Yuan-Ming opera, *Selling Rice in Chenzhou*, in which granary clerks, at the direction of an imperial official, tamper with the scale so that it charges farmers a third more in silver for the grain they need and tamper with the measure so that a peck gives out only 8/10 of the proper amount. *Columbia Anthology of Yuan Drama*, 115–19. Note that those cultivating gardens are permitted to collect their own manure but not to take it from the common paddock; Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/2b.

[55]It is unlikely that each Fieldwork Regulator relies on his own bondservants, because Huo does not allow most lineage members to privately own people. Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/3–4.

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them fairer, they do not mean a mathematical equal apportionment, but rather taking into account the differing fertility of fields. Likewise, although Huo does not explain, for the staff of the Fieldwork regulator to "equalize" inputs must mean deciding who needs more or less fertilizer and seed, or who will make the most of such inputs. The need to judge lineage members objectively is presumably one reason to have non-kin bondservants in these positions. These judgements required expert ability and meant authority over lineage men. Furthermore, the Lineage Head may even rely on the Agricultural Inputs Equalizer and Measures Manager to evaluate the Fieldwork Manager as described above, unless he himself has the expertise to assess the Manager's diligence, success, and ability to make an appropriate field assignment.

In other words, the real ability in and authority over this aspect of lineage estate management lay with base subjects: bondservants. Outside of the workspace, if one of these bondservants presumed to give instructions to a lineage member or to withhold from him lineage property, he might well get a beating. But within the workspace of the granaries and storehouses, his word counts, although it passes through the Fieldwork Regulator. The Measures Regulator's and Manure Regulators' legal status was that of a bondservant, but their occupation mitigated the subordination required by that status.[56] Scholars have shown that some Ming bondservants worked as stewards of estates, giving them great power over tenants. Here, as staffers under a lineage member, they exercise authority over members of the master lineage.

The Wealth Manager and the Imperative to Earn

Alongside ritual propriety and subsistence agriculture, and the bureaucracy managing them all, a fourth logic in Huo's vision appears in his insistence that "increasing wealth" is a key duty for every male member of the lineage.[57] The third section in the *Admonitions*, "Increasing Wealth," explains: "For cappings, marriages, funerals, and sacrifices, all the things needful for proper rituals, if there is no increase in wealth they cannot be supplied."[58] Huo Tao's great-grandfather had come south with just a carrying pole.[59] Huo Tao and his four brothers began with no more than forty *mou* of land among them.[60] Increasing wealth was an urgent task in Huo's eyes. He sets specific annual financial targets for each man in increasing wealth lineage through industrial production and

[56]Contra Chevaleyre's calling bondservants (*nubi* 奴婢, but in Huo's text and elsewhere *pu* 僕) "absolute inferiors;" see Chevaleyre, "Domestic Law and Slavery," 42, 59.

[57]Preserving and increasing wealth was a common focus of family instructions throughout history; see for instance Ebrey, *Family and Property*, chap. 5. Michael Szonyi, following up on his *Practicing Kinship: Lineage and Descent in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002) and on Zheng Zhenman's hypothesis that military households developed lineage organization more quickly (*Family Lineage Organization*, 291), has shown that managing obligations to the state was an important part of managing wealth; see Michael Szonyi, *The Art of Being Governed: Everyday Politics in Late Imperial China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

[58]Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/4b–5a. Supporting an ancestral cult and bringing descendants together was a prime focus of lineage organizations; for an early Ming example, see Jerry Dennerline, "Marriage, Adoption, and Charity in the Development of Lineages in Wu-hsi from Sung to Ch'ing," in Ebrey and Watson, *Kinship Organization*, 170–209, pp. 179–80.

[59]Faure, "Lineage as a Cultural Invention," 17–18.

[60]Inoue, "Zongzu de xingcheng," 96, based on a letter or letters in Huo Tao's collected works.

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commerce. They are punished for falling short, and praised and rewarded for excelling, including with the right to own privately a certain percentage of their earnings.[61]

This aspect of the lineage is handled by the Wealth Manager. What are his responsibilities, and who are his staff? Once the year has ended and rents have come in, whatever is left over from the yearly expenditures should be stored in a storehouse (two appear on the floor plan); the Wealth Manager "controls" these resources. He makes an accounting of them to know whether the lineage is "empty or substantial."[62] The family's real, solid existence rests on its wealth. Huo Tao instructs, referring to industries in the area:

> Shiwan's pottery, Foshan's steel, and Dengzhou's timber can make life easier for people and simultaneously yield profit. The Wealth Manager controls them. Every year, one person is in charge of pottery, one in charge of carbon-iron, one of timber. They report the annual profits from selling on the market to the Wealth Manager. He reports everything at the end of the year to the Lineage Head, so he will know who got the best results.[63]
>
> Managing investments in these three key local industries are three lineage members whom I dub "industrialists." They must be overseeing and coordinating all the lineage members who work in this industry as producers or investors—Huo does not clarify which. These men are still required to plough,[64] but their positions do not rotate.[65] It makes sense to cherish expertise and commercial contacts in these fields.

Apart from their work in the industries, the Wealth Manager and the subordinate industrialists further exercise authority over other lineage men. After the sacrifice to the ancestors at the New Year in the Ancestral Shrine Hall, all the lineage men line up in order of seniority along the Central Hall, where the Lineage Head is standing. In order, each goes to the front of the room and reports his results. Those who added either five *mou* or thirty taels of silver to the lineage's holdings rank "tops," and are honored with wine and a congratulatory message to the ancestors from the Lineage Head. In addition, if they earned more than five *mou*, one-tenth of the excess becomes the personal property of their marital unit. The middle and lowest ranks as measured in *mou* or taels earned are neither punished nor rewarded in the annual ceremony.[66] It must be the Wealth Manager and his subordinate lineage specialists, the pottery, wood, and iron industrialists, who vouch for the earnings of each man. For most men, most years, the results are not very significant, and some are exempt from this performance assessment.[67] But every third year, as discussed below, when punishments are meted out, the wealth assessment does matter.

[61] Another possible contradiction within Huo's text: although the "shared stove" appears so prominently in the title of the diagram, provision for private stoves appears in a regulation that one may collect one's own firewood and may not use common firewood for a private stove; see Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/2b.

[62] Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/5a.

[63] Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/5a. For a study of lineage investment in timber in Huizhou, see McDermott, *Making of a New Rural Order*, vol. 1, parts of chaps. 4 and 5, and chap. 6.

[64] Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/5a.

[65] As long as the industrialist was honest: a later item (Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/5a, 1/7a) warns against taking bribes, or more generally against corruption, while "managing wealth." One should not harm others to profit oneself, nor take other people's fields, houses, and children.

[66] Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/5b–7b.

[67] Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/7b: Exempt are unmarried men (speculation: either they are not mature or the wife's property provides the capital for investment); those over 50; *shengyuan* under 40 (speculation: they still have a hope of passing the provincial exam if they continue to devote themselves to study); *juren* (speculation: they

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Further, the wealth assessment gives the Wealth Manager a ritual role, putting him and his staff between lineage men and their ancestors. While the lineage men are reporting to the ancestors in the annual ceremony, the Wealth Manager takes hold of those who earned neither a single *mou* of land nor a single tael of silver, and thus are designated "useless" or "without merit," and makes them kneel in front of the ancestral tablets. The Wealth Manager announces to the ancestors that "so-and-so contributed nothing. Please punish him." The Lineage Head kneels and says to the ancestors, "Please forgive him." The useless one kowtows and apologizes to the ancestors and then retires. For a second year of no contributions, the Lineage Head says, "Please forgive him again." The third year, however, the Lineage Head says, "Please [consider him] a criminal." The useless one is punished with twenty blows and a scolding, and the loss of the privilege of having private bondservants (if he had it).[68] In Huo's design—even if men had worked hard at farming and even though he states that lineage members must farm and may choose to be assessed only on their agricultural output, rather than on cash income[69]—the specter of this humiliation hangs over most lineage men.

That becomes especially clear in the following passage. In additional to this annual accounting, just as in the imperial bureaucracy, every three years there is a grand accounting of merit, with all the facts about wealth laid out in the hall for verification.[70] Now, those whose performance has been lackluster rather than terrible, that is, they have failed to reach the top assessment, are punished.[71] Before turning to the rewards for the Lineage Head, Huo stipulates that the Wealth Manager and his staff of lineage industrialists play an important role in judging and certifying the achievements of their kinsmen every year. They mediate between them and the Lineage Head, who in turn approaches their ancestors.

But like the Fieldwork Regulator, the Wealth Manager also has non-kin staff members. He has two physically fit men under him: one in charge of the books and calculations and one in charge of urgent errands, each to receive eight pecks a month of grain.[72] Who are they? If they were bondservants, that would be stated as for the Measures Manager and Inputs Equalizer. If they were lineage men, Huo would not need to specify their pay of eight pecks per month, standard for lineage adults. Rather, they seem to be a hired accountant and a hired messenger or agent. These employees not only manage lineage resources, but also keep records, manage relations with business partners outside the lineage, and make reports about lineage members. Those reports can bring punishments and rewards to lineage members, and the reports of the hired specialists also mediate between the lineage members and their superiors, the Wealth Manager and Lineage Head, and between them and their ancestors, including their own fathers and grandfathers.

Moreover, the Fieldwork Regulator and the Wealth Manager mediate between the lineage and the state by preparing tax payments and corvee assignment. When all is ready, the Wealth Manager tells the Lineage Head, and he reports to the ancestral shrine. If the

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still have a chance to pass the metropolitan exam, or their dignity and connections are valuable in themselves); and ranked officials (they have a job outside). The diagram includes a "Reeling Room" in the back portion of the house, but Huo sets no quotas for women's textile production.

[68]Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/5a–7a.

[69]Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/7b.

[70]Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/7b.

[71]Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/7a. But one who earns a top performance assessment for ten years, and then fails to do so for another ten years, is excused from punishment (1/7b).

[72]Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/4a.

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lineage faces accusations of under-paying taxes, the Lineage Head first holds the Accountant and Messenger responsible. But if there is a second violation he blames the Wealth Manager, and if there is a third violation the lineage turns the Wealth Manager over to the state for punishment.[73] The hired accountant and messenger are part of the team mediating not only between lineage men and their ancestors, but between the lineage and the state. As with the bondservants on the Fieldwork Regulator's team, their ability gives them some authority over their social superiors.

Punitive Patriarchy and the Team on the Door

The fifth and final logic in Huo Tao's *Admonitions* is a punitive style of patriarchal control. Zhu Xi's *Family Instructions* includes reports to the ancestors, but no rewards or violent punishments.[74] The Zheng communal family rules include both.[75] So does Huo. Some transgressions by women are harshly punished; for example, married daughters of the lineage who have been divorced, if guilty, are locked up in separate rooms, their food passed in through a hole.[76] In the main, however, it is the lineage men for whom the *Admonitions* specifies prohibitions and punishments.

For instance, the lineage men may not visit wineshops or wear showy clothing. Before coming of age (capping), they may not wear boots; if not yet married, they may not spend the night away from home. If they act disrespectfully in the village (i.e., to neighbors), they are to be beaten twenty blows—a painful and humiliating but not disabling punishment, depending on how it is carried out. If they privately invite guests over without informing the Lineage Head, beat twenty blows. If they go to a banquet without informing the Lineage Head, twenty blows. If they privately amass goods or grain without informing the Lineage Head, twenty blows. If they oppose or are rude to seniors whom they should respect, twenty blows; the senior should personally report the offense. If a senior passes and they don't stand up, beat ten blows. If they curse at a senior, beat twenty blows; someone who personally saw it should make the report.[77] Huo Tao does not, unlike Yuan Cai in Song times, discuss how to discipline bondservants.[78] Patriarchy appears less as violence against women or servants than as violence against lineage men.

In addition to the lineage bureaucrats who help him and have their own staffs, the Lineage Head, for his staff, "rears bondservants"—four of them. They make up a team of doormen. The positions do not rotate. If one accepts that family members held non-rotating positions because they developed expertise, the same could be true of bondservants. The team of four monitors and manages the main entrance and approximately one hundred interior doors: who goes in and out, and how that affects the family's respectability and reputation. It *could* be that the concern is with the hard-won grain and commodities of the family going in and out, but that is not what Huo Tao says, as

[73] Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/8b–9a.

[74] For instance, an official who has been dismissed or demoted is to report that, but his self-report is the end of the matter, and juniors must stand up when a senior passes, but there is no punishment; see Ebrey, *Chu Hsi's "Family Rituals"*, 18, 29.

[75] Dardess, "Cheng Communal Family," 20–21: a junior who disobeyed or argued with a kinsman even one day older than himself faced a beating, but so did seniors who abused their power.

[76] Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/15a. If she had done nothing wrong, however, she should be appropriately remarried out.

[77] Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/19b–20a.

[78] Ebrey, *Family and Property*, 289–93.

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discussed below. All the symbolic power invested in the compound's surrounding wall, pierced only by the main gate, essentially rests on these bondservants.

One of these bondservants is to receive and protect, or dry, imperial communications (*hang/kang yu shu* 炕御書).[79] His tasks are not described, but it must be that he accepts and perhaps archives the lineage's patents of appointment and honors, and maybe other official documents, like tax receipts. A second member of the door team is "in charge of dawn and dusk." His responsibilities take him throughout the compound, managing time. Huo Tao explains,

> The Dawn and Dusk Manager [uses] bell and drums to wake everyone up and get them out of bed [in the morning] and settle everyone in bed [at night]. He should beat [the drum] and ring [the bell] with a loud sound and call outside each family's door [presumably the south-side doors on the men's passageways], saying, 'Do not listen to women's words!' When the first and fifteenth of each month come around, the sons and nephews call out/sing in the ancestral temple 'Do not listen to women's words!'[80]
>
> Huo Tao's stress on production for the lineage means that it is worth investing in a bondservant to assure that every member goes early to bed and rises early. The use of drums and bells echoes normal timekeeping practice in Ming cities. The Zheng communal family had woken everyone (except one person, logically) with twenty-four strokes of a gong, but they also had a daily morning assembly.[81] Since Huo Tao requires no such assembly, he duns this patriarchal warning into the ears of lineage husbands just before they climb into bed with their wives, and as they start the day with last night's pillow talk still in their ears. The women's words to be feared, as we know from the work of Margery Wolf and others, are primarily those urging the husband to work on behalf of her and her children rather than his brothers or the lineage as a whole.[82] The person bossing everyone around—on behalf of the Lineage Head—is a bondservant: a base person whose substance (*qi* 氣) is theoretically inferior to that of the respectable members of the clan.

The job of the third member of the door team is to "receive guests."[83] In the diagram (Figure 1), directly behind the main entrance, to the north, is a lobby. This is an initial holding pen for anyone admitted through the gate. Marked doors out of the lobby lead sideways, east and west, onto the relatively public, male passages that go up the central axis. Across from each of those doors is a skywell flanked north and south by two waiting rooms. The northern ones are labelled "Peaceful Waiting Hall" and the southern ones are labeled "Always Vigilant [about one's one conduct] Porch," with the explanation: "Capped ones rest here." The "Always Vigilant Porch" must be for examination degree holders or officials, or perhaps men of gentry families. These spaces may be waiting rooms, or business might be transacted there; except for the main hall, the compound has

[79]Huo Tao, *Jiaxun,* 1/30. *Hang*1 could mean that he opens them. *Kang* 4 can mean kang 抗, which can mean "to protect or defend" "抗 Kàng" in *Le Grand Ricci Online.* One anonymous reviewer noted that 炕 means "to dry," a necessity for documents in the humid South.

[80]Huo Tao, *Jiaxun,* 1/30a.

[81]Dardess, "Cheng Communal Family," 22.

[82]Margery Wolf, *The House of Lim: A Study of a Chinese Family* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts,1968).

[83]Huo Tao, *Jiaxun,* 1/30.

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no other office space. Further along the main eastern passageway, but accessible by the women's pathways on the north, are reception rooms where wives and girls can meet with their brothers. The Guest Receptionist must be able to assess accurately who a guest is and deposit him or her, with the appropriate level of respect, in the right room, where he or she will wait obediently.

The fourth bondservant on the door team is the doorman proper. Huo gives him four tasks: "To watch out for, examine, and restrain various people from coming in or going out; to watch out for, examine, and restrain women from privately buying wine and meat for their licentious mouths and stomachs; to watch out for, examine, and restrain witches and shamans from coming and going out; and to watch out for, examine, and restrain sons and nephews from going out to spend the night elsewhere."[84] I will study Ming doormen at length elsewhere, so here I make only three points. First, if the Lineage Head is to derive any utility from the doorman, he must authorize him to make and enforce decisions on the spot about who and what fall into these categories. Otherwise—that is, if the doorman runs in to ask about each would-be visitor—the door is left unguarded and the Lineage Head will get no peace. If he does not authorize the doorman to make decisions, the Lineage Head might as well stand at the door himself.

Second, in addition to authorizing the doorman to turn away various visitors, the Lineage Head is also delegating some authority over lineage members. As a first approximation, "various people" and "witches and shamans" probably refers to non-literati healers, Buddhist clergy, fortune-tellers, peddlers, and so on, questionable sorts called in (supposedly) mainly by women, as many scholars have discussed.[85] That means that the first three tasks give the doorman authority to interfere with the business of lineage women who are commoners or gentry and legally outrank the doorman or even own him. The doorman is following instructions, but again, he must exercise his judgement about who is who.

Third, what about lineage men? Huo's rules as laid out in the eleventh section forbid lineage men to attend banquets without informing the Lineage Head, nor may they ever visit wineshops; before marriage they are forbidden to spend the night away from home, while married men may stay in hotels as needed, but may not accept private invitations.[86] The doorman's knowledge and the threat of punishment for lineage men give him authority as a mediator between lineage men and the Lineage Head and ancestors. The doorman would know, and is authorized by the *Admonitions* to know, whether a man had been out, for how long, and whether he had come home drunk or so late that the gate was

[84]Huo Tao, *Jiaxun,* 1/30. 凡大門。司門一人。朝夕防檢雜人出入。防檢婦女私買酒肉恣口腹。防檢巫覡往來。防檢 子姪出外宿臥. Yi, "Gender and Sericulture Ritual Practice" writes in the context of his rules on women that Huo Tao "suggested: '[We] need to arrange for a doorkeeper—to inspect strangers that may go in and out at any time; and women, to find out whether they buy alcohol and meat recklessly for satisfaction of their desires; and to prevent witches and wizards from getting into [our house].'" But, first, the verb 防檢 is translated in different ways in each case, and with insufficient strength. According to *Hanyu dacidian*, it means *fangfan jiansong* 防範 檢束 "to be on guard and keep a lookout AND examine and restrain." Second, Yi has simply omitted the fourth category of people that the doorman was supposed to restrain, thus under-emphasizing the control over lineage men.

[85]See, among many, Victoria Cass, *Dangerous Women: Warriors, Grannies, and Geishas of the Ming* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), chap. 3; Francesca Bray, "The Inner Quarters: Oppression or Freedom?," in *House Home Family: Living and Being Chinese*, ed. Ronald Knapp (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), 259–79; Yunü Chen, "Buddhism and the Medical Treatment of Women in the Ming Dynasty," *Nan Nü* (2008), 279–303.

[86]Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/18–21.

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closed, and he had to wake up the doorman and beg for admittance. What does it mean that Huo Tao licenses the doorman to "restrain lineage men from going out to spend the night somewhere"? Is the doorman *physically* restraining men of the lineage from going in or out, especially during the day (when Ming gates were normally kept open)? Unlikely. Elsewhere, Huo specifies that if a junior is rude to or curses a senior, only the senior in question or a witness may report, presumably to the Recorder of Behavior.[87] Otherwise, Huo Tao does not specify the reporting process. So, it must be that the way the doorman acts on his "watching and examining" duty is to "restrain" the men by deciding whether they have misbehaved and reporting them to the Lineage Head, a parent, or the Recorder of Behavior. That puts the bondservant doorman and his own, authorized judgement of a man's behavior squarely in the middle of a primary Confucian relationship, between a member of the lineage and his seniors and ancestors. And Minister of Rites Huo Tao has designed it that way.

Conclusion

Huo Tao's lineage plan—admired in its own time and copied into later genealogies by other lineages—is not a simple "practical" working out of rites and values already fully understood, but a complex document revealing five different conceptions of family values: Confucian propriety, bureaucratic division of responsibility, subsistence agriculture as a necessity and a virtuous practice, wealth acquisition through local industry, and a punitive patriarchy that comes down hard on lineage men. In the plan, responsibility for Confucian ritual and ethics rests primarily with lineage members, including the Ritual Heir, the Registrar tracking good and bad behavior, and the Master of Ceremonies. Bondservants doing the menial work of serving food must have buffered the lineage men and women so they could practice high-status Confucian ritual gender segregation. This mediation underlines the bondservants' lesser humanity. But other tasks Huo requires of bondservants and hired workers give them authority over lineage members.

As staffers for the lineage man in the post of Fieldwork Regulator, bondservants help determine who gets which plots of land to work and which agricultural inputs; and they measure how much grain each lineage man brings in. The output determines rankings of individual productivity, which, along with the success of the Regulator himself, are reported to the Lineage Head and the ancestors. Legal inferiors not only mediate between family members and the Lineage Head and between family members and their ancestors, but do so based on understanding the strengths and weaknesses of their legal betters—just as, say, the Minister of Personnel and his staff must understand which officials are best-suited to which positions across the empire. As staffers for the lineage men in the posts of Wealth Manager and industrial specialists, hired workers run messages to business partners and keep the books. Their calculations, again, evince the industrial productivity of each lineage man, which in turn determines his rewards and punishments, including his relations with his ancestors. The staffers' power is acknowledged by the provision that holds them accountable first when the government lays an accusation that taxes have been underpaid.

[87] Huo Tao, *Jiaxun*, 1/19b, 20a.

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This is the *only* mention in Huo's *Admonitions* of punishment for bondservants and hired workers. By law, masters could beat servants, and in social practice they did. But Huo institutes harsh punishments of twenty blows for many rule violations by lineage men. And the team on the door would be the ones reporting some of those violations. The four members of the door team also control time in the compound, pass patriarchal warnings on to every lineage man, manage important documents coming in from outside, and sort visitors: turning them away or stowing them in the appropriate reception room with instructions to wait. Here, the lowly serve as mediators, not only for outward-facing presentation of rank as in the ceremonial entourages,[88] but for interactions with visitors of all kinds, as well as, again, among family members living and dead. Finally, the doorman proper, standing at the main gate to the compound, keeps tabs on and even restricts who is going in and out, and when, and why; and Huo Tao explicitly authorizes him to.

Tina Lu has suggested, in considering rules in genealogies, that boundaries between slaves and masters were fraught with anxiety.[89] Indeed, in decreeing that only those lineage members who ranked at least as *shengyuan* and those over forty were allowed to have a bondservant hold a parasol over them, Huo warned lineage members: "You are lucky not to *be* a servant, and that should be enough in itself! As for daring to *use* a servant [to carry your parasol for vanity], this is truly something to beware of!"[90] The fate of becoming a bondservant was too close for comfort. But even when status lines were clear, owned and hired laborers were authorized by Huo Tao to apportion resources, manage measurements, archive communications with the state, tell lineage members when to sleep and when to rise, receive guests, keep the books, run business errands, and manage the gate. Perhaps tolerating the authority of lowly persons required an emotional power play on the part of the lineage members. The already lowly legal status, impoverished condition, and fractured or non-existent kin connections of bondservants, combined with existing legal and social discourse on "respectable" and "mean" people, made it easy to ratchet up disdainful rhetoric, and smear servants as "polluted."

But historians can and should question simple status claims and consider daily experiences by thinking about everyone who was present and envisioning or mapping out their interactions. Doing so in this case raises questions about what the lineage structure—if implemented—really meant for members, and how Huo and those who adopted his plan saw the interaction of the disparate logics of ethical propriety, punitive patriarchy, subsistence agriculture, and business, all under the umbrella of a bureaucratic scheme. Historians should visualize concrete small-scale human interactions as people have created them – continuously, daily, hourly, spontaneously, and in specific places – before talking about systems on a larger scale. Here, lowly hired

[88]Joseph P. McDermott, *The Making of a New Rural Order in South China, Volume II: Merchants, Markets, and Lineages, 1500–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 391.

[89]Tina Lu, "Slavery and Genre in *The Plum in the Golden Vase*," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 81.1–2 (2021), 85–108, at 95.

[90]Chevaleyre, "Domestic Law," 48, sees this as a general admonition not to use bondservants. But it is clearly commentary (printed in smaller characters) on this particular item. The next item specifically permits lineage members over forty years old, even if they are commoners, to have either a bondservant or a servant they have hired out of their own funds carry an umbrella over them when they go out.

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and owned workers legitimately affected outcomes and directed actions of respectable and even gentry lineage members in specific interactions in the workspace. They may have experienced themselves as expert authorities in the workplace. Because most people spend most of their waking time working, therefore, "social status" is too blunt a tool to delineate daily relations in the workplace.

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